

## Message Text

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67

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-12

RSR-01 /103 W

----- 030732

R 101733 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8230

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 2836

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR VT CG

SUBJECT: MOBUTU VISIT TO ITALY

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MOBUTU WILL MAKE OFFICIAL VISIT TO ITALY IN EARLY MAY AND THERE SOME PROBABILITY HE WILL NOT RPT NOT ASK FOR PAPAL AUDIENCE. TO SHUN POPE WOULD BE PARTICULARLY UNFRIENDLY GESTURE, ESPECIALLY INLIGHT OF DETERIORATING CHURCH- STATE REL- ATIONS IN ZAIRE. END SUMMARY.

2. ZAIRE AMBASSADOR TO ITALY MBAMBE RECENTLY INFORMED ITALIAN FONOFF PROTOCOL SECTION, WHICH MAKING ARRANGEMENTS FOR MOBUTU VISIT, THAT " PRESIDENT WOULD DEFINITELY NOT RPT NOT SEEK CONTACTS AT VATICAN."

3. WE LEARNED APR 10 FROM VATICAN DESK OFFICER FOR ZAIRE THAT NO RPT NO AUDIENCE REQUEST YET RECEIVED FROM ZAIRE, BUT THAT ZAIROIS AMBASSADOR TO HOLY SEE SITA MET WITH ARCHBISHOP CASAROLI ONE MONTH AGO TO DISCUSS SUBJECT. SITA, WHO IN PAST HAD BEEN SOMEWHAT APOLOGETIC OVER HIS PRESIDENT' S BEHAVIOR TOWARD CHURCH, SPENT MOST OF HIS INTERVIEW EXPLAINING WHY IT WOULD BE MOST DIFFICULT AND INOPPORTUNE FOR MOBUTU TO REQUEST AUDIENCE AT THIS TIME. VATICAN CONSIDERED POSSIBILITY THAT MOBUTU MAY BE FISHING FOR VATICAN INVITATION BUT SINCE IT NOT VATICAN PRACTICE FORMALLY TO INVITE DISTINGUISHED PERSONS, THERE LITTLE  
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CHANCE FOR SUCH A PLOY TO SUCCEED. DESK OFFICER SAID HE SOMEWHAT HOPEFUL THAT AT ELEVENTH HOUR MOBUTU WILL REQUEST AUDIENCE, ALTHOUGH HE DOES NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT MOBUTU, IN HIS CHARACTERISTICALLY UNPREDICTABLE FASHION, MAY IGNORE VATICAN. TO DO SO, NOTED SOURCE, WOULD BE A SERIOUS SLAP AT CHURCH TO DEGREE USUALLY EMPLOYED WHEN COUNTRY ON VERGE OF BREAKING RELATIONS. HOWEVER, SOURCE COMMENTED, WITH AN ERRATIC PERSONALITY LIKE MOBUTU ONE COULD NOT RPT NOT ALWAYS APPLY NORMAL DIPLOMATIC YARDSTICK.

4. SOURCE SAID VATICAN DEEPLY DISTURBED BY INTERVIEW MOBUTU GAVE TO BRUSSELS " LE SOIR" ON APR 7 ( SIC). FOR FIRST TIME, MOBUTU ANNOUNCED THAT BISHOPS ARE FORBIDDEN TO HOLD MEETINGS, A POLICY USUALLY NOT APPLIED EXCEPT IN STERNEST DICTATORSHIPS. MOBUTU ALSO SAID THAT IT NOT PROPER FOR ZAIROIS CATHOLICS TO MAINTAIN CONTACTS WITH VATICAN WHICH " A FOREIGN POWER." OVER PAST YEAR, SOURCE SAID, VATICAN HAS OBSERVED MOBUTU MOVE AWAY FROM HIS EARLIER POSITION OF A PROFESSED AND PRACTICING CATHOLIC. HE SPEAKS MORE AND MORE OF " AUTHENTIC ZAIROIS RELIGION" AND NEED TO ABANDON WESTERN, COLONIAL EXAMPLES OF FAITH. VATICAN INSISTS THAT CHURCH IN ZAIRE HAS BECOME FULLY AFRICANIZED REGARDING HIERARCHY, LANGUAGE, LITURGICAL ELEMENTS AND SOCIAL ORIENTATION, AND THERE NO RPT NO JUSTIFIABLE GROUNDS FOR CONTINUING TO ATTACH WESTERN OR COLONIAL LABELS. WHEN ASKED HOW VATICAN THOUGHT ZAIROIS CATHOLICS WERE REACTING TO THEIR PRESIDENT'S ATTACKS ON CHURCH, SOURCE SAID VATICAN IMPRESSION IS THAT MOST PEOPLE TOO AFRAID TO SPEAK UP. VOLPE

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**TAGS:** PFOR, CG, VT, n/a  
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KINSHASA  
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